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ABSTRACT

Textbooks play a greater role in students' learning than is usually recognized, and teachers should examine textbook materials more carefully to assess their value for different learners with different cognitive styles. A new, more student-centered model of teaching and learning, the Annehurst Curriculum Classification System (ACCS), focuses on student differences. It suggests that the teacher respond to differences between and within students by developing or adapting observational techniques broad enough and sensitive enough to pick up information about the learner from the learner. A profile of student learner characteristics is developed from these dimensions of learning, considered to be inherent: interest in the subject matter area, age, previous experience, intelligence, motivation, creativity, sociability, emotional-personality, verbal expression, visual perception, auditory perception, and motor perception. Textbooks can also be classified according to these dimensions, and compared with the students' equivalent learning dimensions. A matrix is used to evaluate the text as concept-oriented or fact-oriented, abstract or concrete, having intentions implicit or explicit, presenting criteria implicit or explicit, having complex or simple organization, evoking analysis-type thought or recognition, evoking synthesis-type or isolated-type thought, and evoking evaluative thought or recall. Each of these criteria is specifically defined. It is important not to consider the materials' potential use or allow personal subject-matter bias to influence the classification, and to remember that factors such as interest level, cognitive level, readability, vocabulary level, word and sentence length, and illustrations may be considered. (MSE)

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TEXTBOOKS: DO THEY MATCH YOUR STUDENTS' LEARNING NEEDS?

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Textbook curriculum materials play a major role in the individual student's learning (1). Today they also account for millions of dollars spent by state departments, school districts, and teachers. Foreign language educators, however, have no standard, reliable means for determining whether or not the characteristics inherent in curriculum materials enhance or impede student learning. At present, criteria for evaluating and selecting textbooks are as varied as there are textbook selection committees. Curriculum materials can be better classified, selected, and made more compatible to learners' needs if the criteria for selection are based on an elaboration of the known human learning characteristics that are inherent in the curriculum materials. (Such characteristics are, for example, interest in subject matter area, age, intelligence, motivation, creative abilities, etc.) There is, therefore, a need for foreign langauge educators to know what are the significant learner characteristics that inhere in curriculum materials, how to look for these characteristics, and to determine whether or not these curriculum characteristics "match" the learning characteristics that exist in individual learners.

Johnson (2) states that, "While all curriculum materials possess characteristics associated with such factors..., few materials are yet designed with the explicit attention to these qualities and their effect on learning" (3). Teachers, nevertheless, need to know if foreign language materials possess these specific characteristics and if they exert influence on the student's learning. Joiner (4) believes that "evaluating a foreign language text is at best a difficult task, and all too often it is poorly done" (5); and Cowles (6) says that "haphazard is the word which can often be applied to the manner in which foreign-language textual materials are evaluated by harried teachers, pressured curriculum committees, and others charged with making decisions on this important aspect of today's foreign language courses" (7). Teachers need a means to analyze, rate, and evaluate textbooks easily with confidence and expertise. They need a tool that will allow them to evaluate and analyze methodically, comfortably, and competently, the textbook curriculum materials that students use. Frymier (8), more specifically, believes that

> Curriculum materials classified in terms of human dimensions that affect learning will enable teachers to match "learners" needs and "curriculum materials" more precisely than heretofore, thus enabling teachers to teach more effectively and students to learn better han conventional conceptions of curriculum enable teachers to teach, or students to learn (9).

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It is evident that teachers, students, authors, editors, publishers, curriculum selection committees, and others concerned with textbook analyses, evaluation, selection and adoption of foreign-language curriculum materials, need a reliable single source and instrument that they can use to analyze, classify, and evaluate materials that groups of learners, as well as different individual learners use. Bartel (10) laments, however, that "no single source exists that classifies and evaluates language learning materials" (11).

Collectively, these observations demonstrate some important lacunae in the area of analysis, classification, and evaluation of foreign language materials.

Teacher-centered vs. Learner-centered Instruction:

The foreign language teaching profession has become increasingly aware that the language learner is, or should be, the central figure in language teaching theory. Student-centered approaches have replaced traditional teacher-centered methods (i.e., direct, grammar-translation, or audio-lingual methods). Emphasis is no longer placed solely on turning students into good citizens or mini-scholars, but also upon fostering their personal growth as individuals (12). The learning styles, needs, and interests of individuals that were neither acknowledged nor honored by teacher-centered approaches have been placed in the foreground in student-centered instruction. Educators who view learners as individuals have devised methods that attempt to meet the varying language needs of each student, to sensitize teachers to human values and human relations in the language class, and to create an awareness of the social and affective climate created by the interaction among students and between students and teachers in the classroom (i.e, individualized instruction, Curran's Community Language Learning, Gattegno's Silent Way, Lozanov's Suggestopedia, and Asher's Total Physical Response). The focal point of all of these approaches to language curricula is the interaction between the student, teacher, and learning environment (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Interaction model (13).

The research efforts of the past 25 years in the fields of psycholinguistics, psychology, and learning theory have supported this more interpersonal approach to language learning. Both

theoreticians and practitioners, however, agree that language teaching should no longer be conceptualized in terms of a "single undifferentiated methodological prescription" (14). Stern (15) offers the following observation:

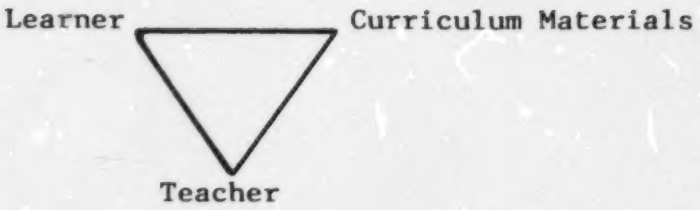
> In spite of the fact that educational psychology had for decades recognized, emphasized, and investigated the concept of individualized learner differences, ...these differences were somehow not allowed for in language teaching methods and textbooks... By and large, language teachers have looked upon language learners with fixed assumptions about how a learner should react to a given curriculum or a given teaching approach, only to be surprised again and again, and often to be quite shocked, by the variety of reactions on the part of the learners (16).

If, indeed, educators are to treat students as individuals, and take these "learner factors" into consideration, then it is evident that no "one best" method, technique, or approach, no matter how efficient, could possibly meet the needs of such a disparate student population. For example, several cognitive style features that may have bearing on second language learning have been identified (17). One such cognitive characteristic distinguishes the broad and narrow categorizers. The former group has difficulty in making pertinent distinctions between categories. They tend to apply a limited language rule, such as the spelling of "ie" stem-changing verbs in Spanish to all verbs. Narrow categorizers have a tendency to limit the rule to the specific context in which it was encountered. This student would learn to apply the rule of "e-ie" only to one or two specific verbs he or she had encountered and would be unable to make necessary and accurate generalizations to other related verbs.

In order to develop a curriculum that considers such individual learner factors of students, the teacher must consider not only the interaction between student, teacher, and learning environment, but also the interaction that occurs between these three variables and materials used in the classroom.

Frymier (18) has proposed such a model. The Annehurst Curriculum Classification System (ACCS) incorporates the three variables (learner, teacher, and learning environment) considered in the student-centered classroom theories and adds a fourth, the curriculum materials. The ACCS model also provides an instrument that assesses the student's learner characteristics and offers a linking mechanism between the learner, teacher, materials, and learning environment (See Figure 2).

According to Frymier, "Learners are unique but complete, different but wholistic organisms" (19). Efforts to improve curriculum in the 1950's and 1960's failed because educators



(Learning environment is evidenced by the enclosing triangle.)

Figure 2: ACCS Interaction Model (20).

presumed that there was "one best way" of prescribing new curricular materials and of sequencing experiences and assessing outcomes for all students. The methodological positions taken in foreign languages during these periods (Grammar-Translation, Direct, and Audio-Lingual methods) are a testimony to this belief. Frymier suggests, however, that "there is no one best way of doing anything in education because people are different" (21). If the teacher accepts the fact that learners are different, and tries to understand these differences, then the teacher can become more effective in his or her efforts to help learners learn.

Students differ from one another at any given point in time, and they also differ from themselves over time. Differences between students are important and real, and changes within a student over time are also important and real. Instructional procedures and curriculum systems that are predicated upon the notion of individual development and growth must be firmly rooted in these two basic assumptions about individual differences.

Differences within individuals and between individuals affect learning in important ways. The skillful teacher knows which differences within and between individuals are most directly related to learning. He or she also knows how these differences are related, and which ones are unrelated to learning.

ACCS - A Reversal of the Conventional Teaching-Learning Model

The conventional view of teaching-learning is that the teacher puts out information and students receive or take it in. The conventional model makes it extremely difficult for the teacher to respond to individual differences. The ACCS reconceptualization of the teaching-learning rules, however, focuses on individual differences.

The first action that the teacher performs in the ACCS model is to observe the student(s). This intake behavior consists of listening, looking, and sensing. After the teacher observes the student(s), he or she interprets those observations by bringing his or her training, experience, and intelligence to bear on them. Following the professional interpretation, the teacher

responds to each individual learner "by choosing the materials and subject matter, and arranging for the learner, those experiences and ideas that he or she feels are most likely to enable the learner to develop and grow" (22). Next each student partakes of the teacher's responses, inteprets them, and does something about them. Then the cycle starts again.

This model suggests that the teacher respond to differences between students, as well as to differences within students by developing or adapting observational techniques that are broad enough and sensitive enoguh to "pick-up information about the learner from the learner. The teacher must conceive of the learner in a global manner. She or he must also conceive of a pattern of discernible human qualities that are important to learning and that can be charted as dimensions of human learning. Together, the following qualities or dimensions form a profile of the student's learner characteristics.

1 interest in subject matter area
2 age
3 previous experience
4 intelligence
5 motivation
6 creativity
7 sociability
8 emotion-personality
9 verbal expression
10 visual perception
11 auditory perception
12 motor perception

These dimensions, developed and validated by 52 educational experts (23) are considered to be inherent in the learner and in curriculm materials that learners use. The ACCS objective is to allow the teacher to identify these characteristics in the learner, and in the curriculum materials, to estimate the pattern of existence of these dimensions in the learner and in the materials, and to "match" the curriculum's pattern to the learner's pattern in order to maximize learning opportunities.

For the foreign language educator, this "linking mechanism" is of utmost importance. Joiner (24) has described the role of the teacher in the student-centered classroom as that of a tailor who must use "craftsmanship, knowledge, and ingenuity to adapt material to a particular client or clientele.

> Material must be selected for colors, texture and weight; cut according to the measurements of the client; and fashioned into a garment according to what the tailor knows of this craft. Furthermore, if the garment is found to be unsatisfactory, alterations are made until both the tailor and the customer are satisfied (25).

This analogy implies at least two important responsibilities of the language teacher: determining the individual needs and characteristics of the student, and designing learning experiences to meet those needs. These "learning experiences" include not only methodology but also curriculum materials.

Classification of a textbook page: An example

A textbook may be classified according to each of the twelve dimensions listed above, and the classification or evaluation of each dimension of the text may then be compared with the equivalent dimension of the student learner characteristics. A teacher may often be interested in only one or two of the dimensions, but when textbooks are being considered for adoption, the committee may want to consider all dimensions, matching textbook characteristics and common characteristics of the learners who will be using the text. The following, then, is an example of the classification process for just one of these twelve dimensions, the dimension of "intelligence."

Before beginning the classification process, the evaluator should become familiar with the descriptors for the dimension being considered. The following sections provide an example of a classification matrix and definitions of the descriptors to be used (26).

Classification matrix

Intelligence

High	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Low
Concept oriented									Fact oriented
Abstract									Concrete
Intentions implicit									Intentions explicit
Criteria implicit									Criteria explicit
Complex organization									Simple organization
Evokes analysis-type thought									Evokes recognition
Evokes synthesis-type thought									Evokes isolated-type thought
Evokes evaluative-type thought									Evokes recall

Definitions

Concept oriented: Materials deal with "big ideas." Facts are "added up" to make a larger whole. Materials make a point. Fact oriented: Materials deal with isolated factual details. They simply recount specific data.

Abstract: Materials are theoretical. They portray generalizations. Concrete: Materials are concrete, practical, and specific.

Intentions implicit: Purpose of materials is implicit. The intentions of the materi-als must be ferreted out. Intentions explicit: Purposes for which materials were prepared are obvious. Intentions are stated explicitly in behavioral terms.

Criteria implicit: Criteria by which one judges materials are not obvious. Criteria are imbedded in materials in an obscured way. Criteria explicit: Criteria or standards by which one judges things are explicitly stated and are apparent, obvious for all.

Complex organization: Arrangement of ideas, information or stimulus material in the materials is complex, intricate and involved. The pattern is difficult to detect. Simple organization: Arrangement of ideas, information, or stimulus material is simple. The organization is straight-forward and uniform. The pattern is obvious and predictable.

Evokes analysis-type thought: Materials "start wheels turning," makes learner think "I saw one of those one time." Materials when sequenced make learner discriminate, separate, and compare. Evokes recognition: Materials evoke simple recognition; they isolate discrete bits of information so that awareness and recognition are sufficient ends in themselves.

Evokes synthesis-type thought: Materials encourage learner to bring information together, integrate ideas. Materials are sequenced in such a manner that patterns, relationships, or larger wholes are fostered. Evokes isolated-type thought: Materials evoke isolated type thought. Information and stimulus material are such that random arrangements and nonsensical clusters emerge.

Evokes evaluative-type thought: Materials require the learner to develop, adopt, or employ criteria; to make comparisons and render decisions. Materials requires the learner to involve standards of conduct or moral development, or scientific discrimination. Evokes Recall: Materials require the learner to recall information, remember factual data, or "recite by heart." Materials require learner to recount from memory or recall specific instances.

Other reminders should also be observed before beginning to classify the materials: (A) Avoid considering how the piece of materials to be classified will be used--unless directions for use are printed on the page. (B) Avoid allowing personal subject matter expertise to bias consideration and classification of the material. (C) Keep in mind that there are factors such as interest level, cognitive level, readability and vocabulary level, word and sentence length, and diagrams and pictures that may affect the classification and that need to be considered during the process.

The process begins on any page in the student textbook. A minimum of six pages should be classified for each dimension, but more may be evaluated in order to include characteristic examples of the textbook's materials. To classify the materials for the "Intelligence" dimension, the teacher looks at the first descriptor in the upper left hand corner of the "Intelligence" matrix and turns the descriptor phrase into a question: "Is the material on this page concept oriented? He or she then looks at the descriptor phrase on the opposite side of the matrix and asks the question, "Or is the material on this page fact oriented?" Based on professional experience and competence, the teacher estimates and records the degree of the page's concept versus fact orientation along the horizontal continuum (8 - 1). The teacher continues the classification by following the same procedures with the next pair of descriptors. After each pair of descriptors is considered, a check is made in one box of the horizontal continuum.

When all eight pairs of bi-polar descriptors have been considered, the descriptors are averaged vertically and collectively. Taken together, these descriptors should be the most representative description of the page as either high or low in the dimension of intelligence. A similar process is followed for several other pages. Collectively, these classifications provide a description of the book in that one dimension.

The classification of this material (textbook pages) as high or low does not indicate that the material is good or bad. It indicates the "match" or "goodness-of-fit" that there is between the intelligence portion of a particular piece of material, and the intelligence factor in a learner or in a group of learners. ACCS theory suggests that the learner who is high in the intelligence dimension, for example, can use curriculum materials that are either high or low. On the contrary, the learner who is low in the dimension of intelligence needs curriculum materials that are correspondingly low.

In a similar fashion, curriculum materials may be classified in each of the ten dimensions using the other ACCS guidelines. Collectively, these classifications form a profile of the curricular material or textbook. This profile can then be compared or "matched" with characteristics of a learner or learners. Students

who are low in the dimensions of experience, for example, need materials that are classified as low in this dimension. Students who are low in motivation, emotion-personality, creativity and social dimensions, however, need materials that are high in these dimensions.

Conclusion

Textbook curricular materials play a greater role in students' learning than foreign language teachers are usually willing to admit. If foreign language teachers desire to pay attention to the differences within and between learners, and if they recognize the importance of student-centered learning, then they must also examine materials that they use in their classes. ACCS, a new model of teaching/learning, suggests a means whereby teachers can attend to the individual student's differences by classifying textbook materials and matching them to learners' needs.

Notes

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18 Frymier, op. cit.
19 Ibid. p. 54.
20 After Frymier, op. cit.
21 Frymier, op. cit., p. 47
22 Ibid. p. 51.
23 Ibid. p. 212, pp. 201-229.
24 Joiner, op. cit.
25 Ibid. p. 154.
26 The classification system described is based on and adapted from Frymier, op. cit.